

Insider Article for Feb 13 publication

## **Teens and Families at the Y**

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If you've been reading anything from the Y lately, you know where we're putting our focus and what we believe is important. You've heard that we're about Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility.

Youth Development is about creating programs that can make a real impact on the lives of the youth in our community. We believe that all kids deserve an opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve.

The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA is focusing on this area through Teen Programs such as Leaders Club and Youth in Government.

Leaders Club began as a seasonal program for teens entering 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade at our Summer Day Camp. The Leaders Club teens work with younger groups in the day camp as mentors. They learn communication skills as well as take on community service projects such as environmental support in a local park and food drives.

The program challenges their character, provides them with skills to make good choices, and builds positive self-esteem. We are currently working on expanding the program as a year-round opportunity for local teens.

Youth in Government is a program that reaches out to students in the Grand Traverse region. Students from area schools participate in state-wide conferences, bill writing, and parliamentary procedure.

In March, the local delegations will head to Lansing to participate in an activity that allows them to experience every aspect of Michigan's legislature as well as propose bills they have written themselves.

Kenyon McFarlane, student delegate for the Leland Chapter, states "Of all the things I have done in high school, Youth in Government was my favorite and most rewarding activity. I met the most amazing, intelligent, diverse students from all over Michigan that I remain friends with to this day."

We are also working to form a middle school chapter next year to give more students the opportunity to understand what it means to be a part of Youth in Government.

Healthy Living is about creating healthy families. Healthy families are the backbone of a healthy community.

The Y believes in these five pillars of growing a healthy family: eat healthy, play every day, get together, go outside, and sleep well. These are the areas of focus in our Family Programs.

Finding the time to cook healthy meals and eat together can seem difficult with today's hectic lifestyles. However, you can begin to move your family in a healthier direction by making small, simple changes in your daily eating habits. You can find great tips that will benefit your family by subscribing to the Healthy Family Home Newsletter at <http://www.ymca.net/healthy-family-home/>.

Playing every day is about being physically active. The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA provides opportunities for physical activity every day of the week. With over 65 programs each week, there is something for everyone in your family!

You can get your family together at the Y. Challenge your kids to a friendly game of basketball or racquetball at our two monthly Family Fun Nights or join in on a parent-child class at our gymnastics center. Not only are you building strong bodies, you are building strong relationships and those relationships are the cornerstone of a strong family.

Spending time outside is fun and easy at the Y. Spend an afternoon snowshoeing or cross-country skiing with your family along the Boardman River on the trails behind our main facility. Just bring your own equipment, stop at the front desk for a map, and head out for some outdoor family fun.

Eating healthy, being active every day, and spending time outside will naturally improve the quality of sleep we get at night. We all know that sleep is critical to the healthy development of our minds and bodies. And after a fun day at the Y, your family will be ready for some much needed rest.

At the Y, we are ready to partner with you to grow strong kids, strong families, and strong communities one family at a time. Call 933-9622 for more information.